

Die Erforderlichkeit des Unmöglichen,

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The series of supra-individual individualities, in which the individual rests integrated and continues his eternal urge beyond the limits of his own finiteness, leads via the family, the family association, the tribe to the people and seems to find a certain conclusion in it. Everyone uses this concept of the people and yet, when they attempt to define it, they are faced with a profound mystery. The essence of this living unity, called a people, is as enigmatic as all living things in what constitutes this unity. It is not, to begin with, the sum of the people's members, not a quantitative unity of a quantitatively diverse entity. In the political struggle demands are made which logically should be based on such a view, but this view itself cannot seriously be put forward even by the advocates of such demands. Nor is it merely a qualitative equality of numerically different things. Any qualitative equality of the members of the same people may be stated, but it does not constitute the essence of the people. Commonality of language, equality of race, membership of a state are also not sufficient to form the concept of a people. They are only attributes of a purpose, and one or the other can be missing without us having to stop speaking of a people. The essence lies deeper. The people is a wholeness that cannot be constructed by adding up the parts. This wholeness is the inner lawfulness of an organic entity, of which each individual is a member, not a part, which is inherent in each individual, co-born and limits and determines his possibilities, which continues to unfold through the succession of generations, like the life of the tree through the vintages of its leaves. The nation is as different from the sum of its members as the tree is from the sum of its leaves. It is also not in all

individuals in equal parts, one can be more, the other less the bearer of the people. Its essence never lies entirely in something that is somehow tangible, in an achieved fulfilment: it always lies in a future that it seeks, it is in every moment and yet is not complete in any of them. They are only attributes of a purpose, and one or the other can be missing without us having to stop speaking of a people. The essence lies deeper. The people is a wholeness that cannot be constructed by adding up the parts. This wholeness is the inner lawfulness of an organic entity, of which each individual is a member, not a part, which is inherent in each individual, co-born and limits and determines his possibilities, which continues to unfold through the succession of generations, like the life of the tree through the vintages of its leaves. The nation is as different from the sum of its members as the tree is from the sum of its leaves. It is also not in all individuals in equal parts, one can be more, the other less the bearer of the people. Its essence never lies entirely in something that is somehow tangible, in an achieved fulfilment: it always lies in a future that it seeks, it is in every moment and yet is not complete in any of them. It is part of the essence of this being to be an approach and a task, just like the individual, and its wholeness is only the unity of a striving for something higher. It is like the rolling wave that the divine tempest drives over the infinite sea, always growing and piling up higher, carrying smaller waves and the light ripples (and in everything stronger or weaker the same pathos of the wind) on its back, only passing through matter as a form and never remaining in it, rolling over too high, foaming or breaking on a cliff and yet rolling out again as the same one under the foam and finding itself again behind the cliff. Just as the sense of the wave is the eternal longing, the moment that is always piled higher, so too is the sense of the people the boundless, ever-proliferating striving. The individual, mindful of manifest inability and limited time, may be humbled. If peoples are not eternal, they may nevertheless believe that they can be, and all modesty for them is only postponement. They do

not know, as the individual does, the necessity of death, which for him follows from his belonging to a temporal series, as a member of which he comes into being and must also pass away. Even if all peoples must perish, this necessity has a different meaning and other reasons. The goal is infinite, and before it even the greatest possibilities are necessarily limited. If the possibility is fulfilled, then no goal is achieved and yet the source dries up. Then the peoples continue to exist until they disintegrate or are absorbed by others, and new beginnings are formed in the disintegration. But the idea is that every nation wants to grow, expand, rule and subjugate without end, wants to join together ever more firmly and integrate ever further, become an ever higher whole, until the universe under its rule has become an organic whole. For each individual, his people is a path to God as to the universe, which he, the temporally limited one, cannot complete, the only right, the only true path – and when the peoples cease to believe in themselves as the only true path, they begin to cease to be peoples. But the peoples cannot finish the path either, the universe as the finiteness of the infinite is only a direction, not a Being, and in this source of all tragedy also arises the tragedy in the life of the peoples, their eternal endeavour and never complete achievement★).